WORKERS' FED

INTERNAL BULLETIN No. 22

Student Fraction Report
NUT Fraction Report
Open letter to NC from Old Bolton Branch
Minutes of debate with ROG
NC Minutes
Student Fraction Report

1. NUS

Generally agreed that the student movement was politically weaker over the past year or two than the immediately preceding period. The left had in some cases lost ground, in others liberal or right wing elements had made gains. The decline was partly the failure of the left, partly the position of students, i.e. their inability to influence their situation (eg grants) as much as they aspired to.

2. Fascism & Racism

(Student comrades should re-read the archive TF 58 on the NUS resolution on racism and fascism.) One of the most important issues to be taken up by student comrades in the coming academic year. The issue had in a sense given the right the chance to gain ground in the student movement. However, the issue being raised, gave the opportunity for the left to combat latent racism or indifference to racism. The polarisation in this sense is a necessary step for the left in fighting on the issue. That said, it should be remembered that the issue had been raised without any previous campaign of propaganda and in a very imprecise fashion. The need is to make general propaganda around the question, fight for Student Unions to support the 'by any means necessary' clause in the NUS resolution, and organise the left in the NUS to fight on the issue. With a view to the latter, comrades in Enfield college are attempting to call a conference of left wing students nationally for the lst Saturday in November. It is hoped that both IS and WG will back this conference (both have said they will, though the WG more definitely than IS as yet). What is hoped to come out of this is a clear resolution to put to the next NUS Conference, and to have built up a network of left wing students who can fight for the resolution in their colleges and make general propaganda round the issue. It is hoped that some sort of left liaison group can be established (initially around this one issue but hopefully widening in scope, but the success or failure of this will depend on WG and IS rather than WF.

3. Reports from Colleges

We have some scattered supporters in teacher training colleges, 2 people in Manchester University (1 soon in Manchester Poly), 1 in Liverpool University, 1 in Trent Poly, 4 members plus 4 supporters in Enfield college, 2 in Reading and little else. Once again out main base is Enfield college.

4. Education Cuts

It was agreed that following the government grants award and the routinism of the 'grants campaign' that grants as an issue in colleges will not be of immediate significance. (Though in some colleges it may be). What will be an issue is education cuts. The effects of these cuts will vary from university to poly to FE college, and from college to college. Struggles will be both national (ie NUS level) and local. It is probable though that local struggles will be most significant. Both general propaganda about the cuts and particular college circumstances should be made. The faction organiser was instructed to prepare a series of notes, in liaison with the NUT fraction, to appear in the IB, for the guidance of student members on the education cuts issue. It was also mentioned that a re-stating of the class bias which exists in Higher Education was necessary, as, though it was commonly accepted as a fact today, it was accepted passively as a fact of sociology and not as an injustice to be fought against and rectified.

5. Colonisation

Though discussed at length by the fraction, the only general conclusion to emerge was that the NC would have to take account of the specific problems in placing students in industry, case by case. These would include personal inclinations, personal idiosyncrasies, family problems etc. The recruitment of students given WF policy on colonisation was also mentioned.
6. Fraction Organisation

Given the relative strength of WF at Enfield college, this is to be the base of the fraction. Fraction organiser to be DBY. The fraction, in order to function, needs liaison between the organiser and the student members. The organiser will be required to produce a monthly bulletin for the fraction, and student comrades will be expected to send regular reports on their activities and the state of the student movement in their area to the organiser. The first report (taking up the issues of education cuts, fascism & racism, etc.) should be published by the beginning of December at the very latest. The next fraction meeting will be in London on the weekend of the Enfield Conference on racism; details to follow.

7. Medical Students

TC raised the issue of medical students and the need to get them into the NHS before the conservative milieu of the doctors' life sucked them up. Various proposals for what to do (resolutions to NUS, liaison with training nurses and doctors, etc.) were put forward, HR and TC to liaise with WF comrades involved in NHS work and report back soon.

The formation of the WF Medical Student Section has been discussed in the past. A group of interested comrades could be formed to contact the leading medical student groups across the country.

A group of comrades could then produce a bulletin and report back to Enfield Conference.

8. Conclusions

The importance of the WF in Enfield is not to be underestimated. The organiser has a crucial role to play in making sure that the fraction functions effectively. The student members must be encouraged to participate actively in the organisation. The fraction needs to be well-organised and well-informed in order to be effective.

The fraction should focus on the key issues facing students today, such as tuition fees, education cuts, and the threat of fascism. By working together, the fraction can make a real difference to the lives of students and the wider community.
MINUTES OF WFNUT NATIONAL FRACTION AT AGGREGATE, 21/7/74

Present: TBr RR JW MCy LY SA KB ATH CBv JB IH DS BW MT CL BW RSL IW JR
Apologies: CBN SMg AH

TBr: introduced CBn's document on Perspectives for September. This was only a general picture of the London Allowance Campaign; local situations varied enormously. IS through R&F had been very sloppy in their approach, eg they had dropped the demand for hatcheting.

CBv: Two questions we must bring up. Document R&F paper and to what extent did the row over confidence in the NUT Executive reflect the personalities of Dick North & Boba?

RSL: Too much emphasis in document on London sitn. Disagreed with 25% claim. We should be pushing for a flat rate increase.

JB: 25% is official claim. To refuse to fight for a return to this would be sectarian.

RSL: It's still a retreat from last year when we were fighting for flat rate.

DS: R&F in an 'enclave'. Their attitude does not reflect the shop floor.

IH: Agreed. We should push for more resolutions in branches coming from school NUTs.

RSL: Not always a good idea. What if school militant and branch reactionary? Sows disillusionment at school.

IH: Other way round at my branch. Build up using secondary and feeder primaries joint NUT meetings. Local parents meetings could pressurize weak branch.

JB: R&F has organizational framework. We must get away from fetishism of branch work: write for R&F IB. Our orientation is OK, but we must operate more cohesively.

MT: How can we gain maximum unity in September? Concentrate on London Allowance or present a slate of demands? Realistically, we must focus on inter-union activity in London.

IW: We should fight for flat rate salaries claim, not 25% interim. Any interim should have been passed at NUT Conference. People are now thinking of next year's claim.

JB: Submitted the following resn. which was PASSED.

Perspectives Document, page 2. Delete all after 'we must... to end of section', and replace with:

* "Start campaigning immediately for the new claim & the need to fight on it, linking with the experience of London and stressing a) no retreat on claim for scales 1 & 2; b) need for strike action; c) need to build alliances with other workers."

DS: This is a guideline, not a panacea. R&F must fight for branches based on schools, etc. AGREED.

MT: Submitted two alternative amendments, the following of which was PASSED.

* "WFNUT must call for meetings of local assns and branches of other unions (NALGO, etc) who are willing to take action for the £400 demand. We must work to build a TU Alliance around the London Allowance issue, linking it also with demands for restoring education cuts, written conditions of service for teachers, and no covering for staff shortage. WP to produce a pamphlet on this."

JB: Accepted main emphasis was on LA. Must start campaign immediately. Stress no retreat on bottom scale.

MT: Must include telescoping of scales.

JB: Flat rate increase is an IMG tactic & ignores scale structure.

CBv: Submitted the following amendment, which was PASSED.

* 'Perspectives Document: page 2 line 14: delete 'against R&F', insert 'within R&F against its present line'; page 2 line 8: insert after 'the LP',

* 'Local TUs, Trades Councils and local R&F rank and file movements'; add at end of document: 'We fight for R&F and NUT to support working class struggles, for regular production of the R&F newspaper, with broadsheets on important issues (eg Beth Stone, LA) between papers.'

DS: We should write articles on theory (eg Makarenko) for R&F newspaper.

IW: Telescoping of scales: we must press for starting salary of £2500. Also a flat rate increase of £500. Both AGREED. The followng amendment was PASSED. Perspectives Document page 2, para 2: delete 'We must press... to end of sentence.
Overtime

DS: Overtime payments the normal sitn in factories. They already exist to a large extent in techs.
LY: Preferred to have staff sit in where overtime is not necessary.
JB: Overtime not a big issue, NAS took up overtime as a diversion from fighting on the basic rate. It would be the same with us, or seen to be the same.
IW: For o/time payments. After all, we do it already. This because the contract is so vague. The issue is not counterposed to a flat rate increase.
RR: Why is the NAS, which purports to professional body, using the overtime argument?
JB: As a cop-out from basic rate issue.
IH: First priority to tighten up the contract. Analogies with techs not valid because of social relationships within school. Reports a good issue for overtime payment, but PTA meetings not so. Must specify what we consider overtime working. Can't restrict ourselves to a 35 hour week when we get 16 weeks 'holiday' a year. Admit this is not all rest, but the public thinks so.
ReL: Overtime payments is the issue in Coventry.
IW: Can't label NAS right wing, NUT middle of the road. The NAS is a mixture, sometimes it's quite militant.
IH: Requested brief report on NAS & Teesside struggle.
RR: NUT scabbed on this strike.
ReL: Not so. The NAS was not operating here; the NUT got lumbered.
DS: Reports & internal exams a good topic to raise o/time payments with, but it should not be seen as the only excuse.
JB: We should be pushing for all these things to be assimilated into the school day. We would lose our chance if we pushed for overtime. We should instead be going for time off in lieu. The basic claim and o/time payments will be counterposed.

*A vote was taken, and the meeting was divided 8-8.
CBY: Suggested we should follow R&F line for the time being. DS & JB to write for WIB. AGREED.

NUSS (Deferred through lack of time)

Racism in schools

IH: The NF are organizing in schools. They distributed leaflets to school kids at their rally on June 15th. Leaflets have been distributed outside schools and pushed through students and teachers' letterboxes. Unfortunately, many schools are fertile breeding grounds for their ideas. The racialism in school textbooks only compounds this. The problem is to generate self-reliance amongst the students themselves. It's no good us waltzing in and setting up black study groups or trying to begin NUSS branches 'cold'. One approach is to push for student control of reading materials. These are funded from a variety of sources. At my school we tried to get a day closure to have a staff conference. This was not allowed, but the idea was there and when the school was shut for local govt. elections, we had the conference then. Student autonomy was a sizeable topic. We now have specific proposals to follow up which lean heavily on the curriculum.
CBY: We must also organize specifically against the NF leaflet. Joint vigilante groups from the NUSS and local anti-fascist c'tees is not an ultra-left idea. Counter-propaganda leaflets must be produced.
JB: Agree with MT's proposal of reversal of normal anti-NF tactics in schools and so would propose debates with NF in schools where they are a problem. Also propaganda in local housing estates.
LY: SPUC & LIFE have been organizing in schools. They have links with the NF.
JB: In Liverpool teacher has been getting kids to hand out SPUC leaflets. Bernie Regan (London R&F) said he was going against the R&F whip for NUT Conference resms in order to agitate against the NF.
JWd: Opposed to debates with NF.

LY: We should bring in people from NUSS to oppose NF & SPUC etc.

MCy: Problem here as many teachers are members of the NF.

MT: The NF give out leaflets, so should we.

DS: We should be working around building a National Anti-Fascist Committee, using the National Anti-Fascist Conference at Warwick University on 23rd November (see Branch Circular 75 - LH). Our platform should be racism in schools. We should work to build NUSS & LPSV in schools.

IH: Can we clarify two points. What is attitude to inviting the NF to debates in schools, and do we disagree the NF whip in order to try and get anti-NF resolutions submitted at conference?

TBr: Where NF are active bring them into the school.

SA: You can't generalize. Even if the NF were active and invited to a school, it is quite possible they would win the debate because of latent racism in the school.

LY: Noticed racist expressions being used for the first time when a 5 yr old goes to school. We need literature to counteract this.

CBry: Two points. One, we must fight within R&P, NUT and NUSS for support for local anti-fascist committees. Two, where the NF are active, we must organize leafletting of schools and the catchment areas. We should set up vigilante groups where appropriate.

**Women's Rights**

JWd: Found the NAS chauvinist and the NUT patronizing. Women teachers average £7 p.w. less than men in salary. We must fight for the Women's Charter while reserving the right to amend it on eg wages' caucuses.

MCy: School curriculum is basically sexist. We must analyze school literature; we can use such things as the sexism of pop lyrics as the basis of a lesson. We should organize in the schools against SPUC & LITE, and also fight against the chauvinism of careers education.

TBr: On the question of Gay Rights, discrimination often comes in the form of denial of promotion.

IH: A simple reform is to ask for boys' and girls' names to be mixed alphabetically on their registers.

(This has already been done in some Authorities.)

CBry: We must fight for our amendments to the Women's Charter at all levels. Eg. no qualifying period of service or loss of sickness benefit for maternity leave, which should apply equally to married and unmarried women.

ATH: In Cumbria unmarried mothers who teach are forced to wear wedding rings; they must be called ‘Mrs’ in school. We must link up with other TUs on the Women's Charter.

SA: Women in Education is doing a list of non-sexist books. (I have a short-list of these: available on request IH).

JB: We must concretize our approach towards the R&P Newspaper. Propose TBr write about Gay Rights. The girls do woodwork, boys do home economics is often just tokenism.

**Useful addresses:** Teachers Against Racism, 9 Huddleston Rd, London N7 (01-607 7633)

Women in Education, 4 Jill Walker, 14 Clare Rd, Levenshulme, Manchester 19.

**Organization of Fraction**

* Next fraction meeting soon after beginning of term in September. After that roughly every term. Day to day leadership of the fraction to be in the hands of the London fraction. PASSED.

The following were elected:


Fraction Secretary: Ian Hallingworth, 93 Hanover Rd, London N16. (01-800 9915).
Open Letter to the N.C. from the old Bolton Branch.

Introduction: It was decided at the N.C. prior to the Aggregate, that the Bolton and Manchester branches should merge into one Greater Manchester branch. This idea had been discussed previously but no decision had been reached as the Bolton comrades disagreed mainly on practical grounds; i.e. as there is a distance of about ten miles between the two centres and the areas of work are very different.

The N.C. decision came as a surprise to us however, as RR had not attended the meeting, and JW's letter gave no details as to the reasons for the decision. Our previous understanding of the argument was as follows: Bolton branch has always been efficient and organised, but now, as a result of RR's leave of absence, lacks experienced comrades. On the other hand, Manchester is disorganised and loose, but contains several very experienced and theoretically sound members. A fusion would therefore make use of the strengths of each branch and hopefully eradicate the weaknesses. RR was under the impression, also, that he was seen as the key in this amalgamation as the potential strong organiser for the region.

However, when the N.C. explained it's reasons to the joint branch at a special meeting called during the Aggregate, it emerged that SM felt strongly that Bolton was in most need of the fusion for several reasons:-

a. A failure to implement NC decisions, principally over the LB.

b. An extreme parochialism, leading to a concentration on local issues to the detriment of the National Group.

c. All as a result of a tendency to form a clique around the central figure of RR.

It was felt by the majority of the NC that Bolton was top heavy and for this reason had fallen into the three dangers mentioned above, as a result of RR's disagreements with some NC decisions. SM stated that there were many symptoms of a clique apparent e.g. the inability of the rest of the branch to discuss anything on a political level, and a tendency to protect each other.

This line of reasoning was totally new to all the members of the Bolton branch, as no attempt had been made to discuss these issues with the branch previously, and we were unable to counter the arguments on the spot. We have therefore spent some time in the ensuing weeks thinking about what we consider to be a mistaken analysis, and trying to understand how such an impression was conveyed to the NC. We accept the NC decision as a present fact but feel the analysis needs clarifying.

I. We accept responsibility for the fact that we have failed to organise adequately as a branch vis a vis the central organisation. We have seen our major task as being to maintain a credible presence as WF in the locality; in our various TU branches, in Womens Liberation, in contact eds, in Public Meetings and in the Council of Action which we instrumental in setting up, and which for four months functioned as a focus for militant activity in
Bolton, with a regular news sheet, demonstrations, and public meetings, and has now turned into a functioning anti-fascist committee. The main problem was seen by us to be that of RR's extended leave of absence which began in September, and ended three weeks ago, the purpose of it being to rebuild his house. This meant that from the time of JC's move to London in the middle of September, the only members of the branch were GS, SA and VN, none of whom were capable of initiating meetings or educational. This meant that WF's and interventions in the Council were mainly RR's responsibility to the extent that by February 1974 RR had no real time to work on his house and was in fact spending most of his leave of absence on political work, including standing for president at college.

AS joined the group as a probationary member in Jan and IH joined in Feb, thus increasing the possibility of the branch functioning in RR's absence. The fact that we held together and made real meaningful interventions in Bolton during this period was a source of surprise to us.

It was at this point that we pointed out to RR that he had so far had no real leave of absence, and must do so if he was to finish the house by the govt. deadline of June. RR agreed to attend branch meetings and NG's but otherwise concentrate on college and house. We now see that this led to the branch putting it's energies into local activities, though not exclusively so as our presence at demos and national conferences shows, and failing to relate these activities to the centre, or to spend time in detailed discussion of IB's and NC's as a branch.

In May RR was still in difficulties over the house, and from May 6 to June 28th did not attend branch meetings. This obviously meant that we could not participate in NC discussions, and we now feel that this led to SM's impression that the whole branch objected to NG decisions and was opting out. We do not agree that this was a conscious move on our part, merely a result of inexperience, and we were at no stage made aware by the centre that we were negligent in informing them of our activities.

Where the LP was concerned, the centre had assumed from the beginning that Bolton was a centre ripe for LPYS work. There is no LPYS here at the present, and we expressed our doubts and disagreements clearly from the beginning. However, GS was delegated by the branch to look into the possibility, but after several weeks of delay, explained he did feel competent to take a lead in the LP. When AS joined, he and GS again made contact with the LP and attended several meetings. All the branch was involved in LP canvassing during the elections, and since then GS and AS have continued to make contacts and go to ward meetings with a view to setting up an LPYS. SA has been involved in the Rochdale LPYS, which is new and active and has several close sympathetic contacts there. We do not consider that these activities illustrate a divergence from group policy and they have been discussed regularly at regional level with no criticisms from other branches.
2. In view of the above, we consider that SM's analysis of the branch's behavior as cliquish is mistaken.

RR has been very much in the background for the past six months at least. This explains our lack of contact with the centre and possible misunderstandings as to the correct line for the branch to follow. It has been his absence that has caused this, not his "overpowering personal leadership".

3. In conclusion, we now consider that misunderstandings have arisen mainly as a result of the National Group's system of organising itself around the contact between centre and one central figure in each branch, the branch organiser. In Bolton's case, the b.o. was RR, who was on leave of absence and was thus unable to represent the branch effectively to the NO, and unable to convey the centre's decisions to us. Since the centre was of the opinion that RR was leading the branch astray, it would have been logical to communicate with other members of the branch. This was never done. No member of the NC ever discussed these crucial issues with any branch member other than RR. SM says it was impossible to discuss on a political level with members of the branch. He never tried.

We are of the opinion that it is urgent for the group to assess critically this breakdown in communications, and to reorganise it's functioning so that other, more inexperienced comrades are drawn into the central discussions and not relegated to this subordinate position. If the branch is indeed top-heavy, the NC is mainly responsible for choosing not to relate to the other members in the branch.

As an immediate and minimum proposal we suggest that, as a matter of course, if the NC has criticism of individuals or branches, these should be discussed with the branch concerned, not simply with the b.o. and should be put down immediately in writing for all the branch to see, to eliminate the destructive rumours which seem to be circulating at present, to the extent that members of other branches had heard of our supposed clique before we had.

Fraternally
Sue Arnall
for the Bolton cell of the Manchester branch.
DAVID YAFFE (RCG): WF wrote asking for a discussion on programmatic questions. But the RCG insisted on discussing tasks first. Why? Because of the ideological backwardness of the revolutionary movement (as shown e.g. by IS and by the Fourth International). We need to retrieve a whole tradition of communist politics – we need to make a critical accounting of other tendencies. Particularly we need to develop economic theory. Has WF carried out these tasks? WF does agree with the need for theoretical work. But WF has not done that work.

'Permanent Revolution' has only come out twice.

Theory has to be sharpened and concretized in the struggle – but we must balance the need for involvement in the struggle with the need for theoretical work. Most groups tend to have an empiricist method and adapt to the moods of the working class ("workerism"). This is true of WF. This workerist tendency involves underestimating the strength of reformism in the working class – and WF does tend to underestimate the strength of reformism – WF tends towards the WRP theory of reformism as a "thin crust" on the working class. But in fact the day-to-day reality of capitalism bolsters reformist illusions in the masses. The crisis of capitalism will undermine reformism – but ideological struggle is crucial in defeating reformism.

The Transitional Programme is based on the assumption that capitalism is in decline. The elementary demands of the working class come up against the limits of capitalism. This was not so in the post-war boom, but it is the case now. When WF discussed the sliding scale demand, WF said that one part of the conditions motivating that demand was a situation of defeats for the working class. But really objective conditions are crucial in motivating transitional demands.

To sum up: our tasks are – (a) work out an international programme; (b) intervene to concretise that programme – for a small group that means intervening in the vanguard; (c) develop a cadre.

SEAN MATGANNA (WF): DY quoted Trotsky on the need for theory. But Trotsky goes on in that same passage to point out that there is a big gap between the desire to develop theory and the achievement.

DY says we should define tasks first – but really we should define programme first. The RCG blandly talks about 'tradition' – but what does that mean? Roy Tarsel!

The central difference between WF and the RCG is on the question of what a propaganda group is. WF in fact has "developed theory" – by and in relating to the class struggle. E.g. we discussed terrorism in relation to the struggle in Ireland. We discussed the General Strike in relation to events like July '72. WF agrees with the RCG on the general need for theory. But how concretely do we work out theory? The primary thing must be the class struggle. Look at the Bolshevik Party. It developed with a false perspective, no fully-articulated independent programme. But it developed in relation to the class struggle, step by step. And we have to follow that procedure today. We can't proceed by an abstract scheme of: 1st theory, 2nd propaganda, 3rd agitation. That is subjectivism.

If we just proceed from our subjective inadequacies, then when we look at how weak we are we will despair. But we should proceed from a Marxist confidence in the working class.

You can't work out a meaningful "strategy for the working class" unless you are a mass revolutionary party. Otherwise it is a matter of "wouldn't it be nice if?". On the question of programme – RCG seems to be inconsistent – both fetishising the 1938 Transitional Programme and having an idealist conception of the group developing the programme, out of its own head. RCG defines agitation as talking to the whole working class – but that is wrong. Even a tiny group needs to do agitation locally. Any group that is not totally isolated from the working class needs agitation.

The RCG has a scholastic conception of theory. The RCG stands only on a desire to develop theory and a tradition. That tradition – the Tarsel/RCG tradition – is a filthy tradition.
JULIA JENSEN (RCG): Marxism is a scientific guide to action. We must ask: how do we win the vanguard in the present period? The vanguard can only properly be defined as revolutionary workers, not as advanced reformists. The IMG and the USML have a massively too wide definition of 'vanguard'. Really there is no proper vanguard today - economism has a solid domination. This present generation of the working class will be a brake on developing the struggle. The material basis of this fact is the absorption of the unions into the state. We need to develop an analysis of reformism - but in fact the left has no analysis of reformism, thus no independent strategy. So therefore the working class has no independent strategy. The winning of the vanguard must go together with an analysis of reformism. Spontaneity is in no sense independent of the bourgeois state.

The Transitional Programme singles out a vital role for youth. Likewise today. In place of the betrayals by the Stalinists and social-democrats which won the background to the Transitional Programme, we have the betrayals of the economistic leadership.

Need for an internationalist position and solidarity work. Fascism can triumph if the working class does not seize power - thus anti-fascism without a fight against reformism is empty.

The RCG does not have an abstract method. Our tradition is Marxist irrespective of Roy Tease and Tony Polan.

ANDREW HORNUNG (WF): JJ is confused on 'vanguard' - is it the Marxists, or is it the section the Marxists try to win over?

Strategy - what does that mean for organisations our size? Either it is meaningless or it is an idealist blueprint.

Fundamentally tasks are derived from the programme. We shouldn't be mechanical about it - nevertheless, fundamentally the programme does determine tasks. The RCG's discussions of the question of programme do not recognise the aspect of a programme as being a codification of experience. We must recognise that the working class, even under reformist leadership, can wage struggles pressing in a revolutionary direction. Revolutionaries must learn from such struggles. The political independence of the working class is not all-or-nothing - it is wrought piecemeal.

We must reject the Healyite idea of theory and practice being always fused into identity - but equally we must reject the RCG's idea of "first theory, then practice".

DY says reformism is based on the appearances of capitalisation. Yes, but the appearances are ambiguous, spontaneity is ambiguous.

On the question of solidarity work - yes, it is very important. But why has the RCG not fought for solidarity with the IRA?

PATRICK GOODE (RCG): Everybody on the left except the RCG has a 'minimax' conception of programme. Look at what WF says about inflation in WF no. 62. On the one hand it says "Industry could be run perfectly well under workers' control, without capitalists and their profits" - something any social democrat would reject. On the other hand, a list for minimal reforms - e.g. zero thresholds.

We need Marxist theory, i.e. political economy, to find the objective trends of the epoch. WF doesn't recognise this need for political economy.

MARTIN THOMAS (WF): On the question of tradition. WF recognises that our tradition is that of the Fourth International, and we recognise that it is a bad tradition - we relate critically. The RCG prettles about 'Marxist tradition' - but Marx died 91 years ago. Where is the Marxist tradition since then? The F.I.? - but the RCG writes off the F.I. This doesn't mean that the RCG avoids the bad features of the tradition: it simply means (a) they have the tradition of one of the worst currents in post-war Trotskyism (Euston-Grant-Tease); (b) they don't see the problems, they are dogmatic.

FRANK RICHARDS (RCG): It is not true that the RCG separates theory and practice. Look at what we write and you'll see it isn't true. On the F.I.: WF just describes the history of the F.I., no analysis. WF concentrates too much on formal political positions.
PHIL SEMP (WF): The RCG has an idealist conception of programme - shine it up in your garret, and then you can discuss programmatic issues, or go out to the working class. Really developing programme cannot be separated from regular involvement in the class struggle. There’s a lot of talk about "crisis" from the RCG - but little about how actually fight the crisis. The RCG has a mechanical conception of perspectives - perspectives over here, brilliantly clear, shining bright, masses over there, confused; crisis comes and the masses are driven to the leaders with the perspectives. But compare 1917! The leaders were behind the masses and had to learn from the masses.

A MEMBER OF IS: JJ is wrong on the question of vanguard - but I want to deal with the article in WF 62 on the women’s conference. This article is not at all critical of the conference, but in fact women at the conference were saying such things as "why should we bother about Kevin Gately - what we're interested in is how many women got hurt at Red Lion Square". The article is not rooted in an analysis of the crisis of capitalism.

TONY WHELAN (non-affiliated): Pat Coode’s approach is wrong. You can’t argue from a few sentences in a couple of articles that WF is reformist. Any real revolutionary organisation will produce shitty articles occasionally.

WF talks about theory, but uses no concrete analysis. For example, he says any reformist will say that we can do without capitalists. Will Wilson say that? No he won’t!

We must understand that historical materialism is not just (as WF says) economic theory, but seeks to understand the class struggle in its totality.

STEVE MURRAY (RCG): WF underestimate the crisis. WF have an IS conception of the revolutionary party. If WF do not believe you can have a strategy until you lead the class, then what do WF aim to win workers to?

DANNY REILLY (WF): On the question of Ireland. The RCG have a history of unprincipled alliance with people to the right of the IS leadership on this question (the Revolutionary Opposition’). Certainly the RCG gave no aid to the Left Fraction when they waged a principled struggle against the IS leadership on the question of Ireland. The RCG have produced one leaflet on Ireland – no mention of solidarity with the IRA. In the Troops Out Movement, does the RCG fight for a solidarity position? No, they go along with the ING line.

This shows capitulation and flabbiness.

TONY ROBERTS (RCG): Sean Matgamna says the programme comes from the experience of the working class in action. This is empiricism. It is a fundamental theoretical error to say we can only have a meaningful strategy when we have a mass party - it means we do not have a strategy to win workers to. Take the question of the Labour Party. The RCG has a strategy on the Labour Party - WF just adapts its position empirically.

ANOTHER MEMBER OF IS: JJ was very abstract on the 'vanguard'. Rank-and-file committees of various sorts are not necessarily consciously revolutionary - but they are an important break towards political independence. And sizable sections of workers are involved in these committees. This is not a matter of building a vanguard, but of recognising its existence.

Both WF and RCG have a reasonable conception of building the party - but they tend to one-sided emphasis. We have seen similar one-sided developments in groupings inside IS

ED CONDUIT (WF): WF are actually fighting reformist ideology, in the RCG, the LF, etc. WF don’t have a 'strategy' - that’s true. What we need is plant, not blueprints. The RCG impose the blueprint of 'Labour to power on a socialist programme', while WF fight Labour realistically, with such demands, based on the real situation, as implementing the election promises.

STEVEN PARKER (RCG): To say the RCG is scholastic is a red herring. The RCG is involved in practical activity. On Ireland it is WF that has the scholastic position. Practical action to get the troops out of Ireland is much better solidarity than shouting "solidarity with the IRA!".
JOE WRIGHT (WF): The article on inflation in WF 62 is not in fact shitty.
(Interjection from T. Whelan - "I don't think it is, either!"). PG says the
article calls for zero-thresholds, while it should call for a sliding scale.
Trotsky said the transitional programme was the programme of socialism in
a popular form. Zero-thresholds, automatic, legally-binding, based on rank &
file price committees, etc., are in fact the sliding scale, expressed "in a
popular form" - i.e. so people can understand.
Solidarity with the IRA is the practical way of arguing Troops Out
logically, without dishonesty. The practical line of just saying 'troops
out' is not practical in real day-to-day argument.

SEAN MATSUMO (WF): The RCG's disowned 'tradition' is not worth much. E.g.,
take the question of 'deformed workers' states'. There are many 'deformed
workers' states' theories. The Grant/Haston 'd.w.s.' theory writes working
class activity out of history - it is reactionary - it has led Grant to
conclusions like that Syria is a workers' state. Yet that is the theory the
RCG has got from Tearsa.
Abstractly we can pose two models: IS "learning from struggle" versus
RCG propagandism. On the RCG propaganda model, it becomes impossible to break
the overwhelming hold of bourgeois ideology. We must understand the
spontaneously communist upsurges of the working class. Otherwise we would be
just a sect. Without the idea of communist spontaneity, Trotsky's activity
and the F.T. would be a joke.
The RCG's concept of democratic centralism is meaningless, being not related to
intervention.
The RCG uses 'the epoch' as a mechanical explain-all.
The RCG theory that transitional demands are all defensive leads to the
SLL view that you can make do with reformist demands because they're
impossible under capitalism.
On Ireland, there are at least two positions in the RCG - Colia Holt has
the IMG position, Tony Roberts has the SWP position. Totally unclear.
Still we are prepared to collaborate with the RCG - unless the RCG refuse
to relate to the real class struggle.

DAVID YAFFE (RCG): RCG doesn't think Syria is a workers' state, Do agree that
a mass Troops Out Movement on the model of the US anti-war movement is on the
cards. Don't believe the class struggle generates spontaneous communism.
Capitalist crisis forces workers to do such things as manning flying pickets
- but revolutionary consciousness comes only from intervention.
WF ignores the strength of reformism, not understanding that the appearances
of capitalism reinforce bourgeois ideology.
Is capitalism in decline? If not, the Transitional Programme is dead. But
in fact, the RCG believes, capitalism is in decline and the T.P. is relevant.
The sliding scale of wages demand follows from a Marxist analysis of
inflation. The key aspect of it is workers' & housewives' committees. This is
a concrete strategy.
We can't have solidarity with the IRA as a basis for Irish solidarity work
- that would justify the CP having solidarity with Popular Unity as the basis for
Chile solidarity work. We must not put ultimatums to solidarity work.

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NATIONAL COMMITTEE MINUTES 22.6.74

Absent: RL, JC (both working on paper), FS, BR

Minutes of last meeting

DS Objected to inaccurate minuting of his contribution on the "Building Workers Fight Campaign" as appeared in minutes of 30.4.74. Wasn't against "whole idea of campaign", was rather putting forward different proposals for implementation.

Agreed that the minutes were inaccurate in this respect.

Steering Committee Minutes

CLY Pointed out that there had been a lapse in the appearance of SC minutes. NC members outside London relied on the SC minutes to keep in touch with what was happening.

LW Lapse only extended to two SC meetings. Apologised for this - would get up to date within a week.

Agggregate Agenda

DS Proposed that a session should be set aside at the Aggregate for fraction meetings. Thought that industrial work of the group and the fractions needed strengthening.

SCY Opposed to this. Agenda was already tight and the fractions (apart from NUT) were in a bad state.

DS That was just the point, is should be trying to correct situation.

EM Thought that many comrades would come forward at fraction meetings, who would not be willing to speak from the conference floor.

Agreed to hold separate fraction meetings at the aggregate.

DS Proposed separate session on the LP at aggregate - agreed.

International Political Perspectives

MT Briefly introduced his document. Wanted to make two amendments to the section on Portugal: to delete point b) and substitute "for the total separation of church and state" and in point a) to insert "immediate elections for a Constituent Assembly".

JW Thought that the document was correct overall, but that the section on the Middle East was weak. The Middle East had now become the major centre of inter-imperialist rivalry, but there was no analysis of this in the document.

AH Was also critical of the section on the Middle East. The electoral polarisation in Israel, caused by the October war, did not represent a real crisis for Zionism, also a part of individual terrorism was not so much despair but more a question of the urgency of the time scale.

SM Criticised the document as a whole. Too many half-thought out answers to complicated problems.

MT The point was not to produce a total rounded out analysis but to give a codification of what we understood so far.

SM The trouble was that the codification was coming before the analysis.

AH Thought that SM was saying that we had to start from scratch in our analysis rather than building on what we already had.

JW Thought that the document was too much a list of positions rather than an analysis of the balance of forces and trends.

AH This was surely the task of the economic document.

EC Asked about Ireland. There was no mention of this in the document - where would this come up?
Had originally intended Ireland to come under International Perspectives but now thought that it made more sense for it to come under British perspectives.

SM Proposed separate document and separate session on Ireland.

Agreed - International Political document to go forward to aggregate.
 - Separate session and document on Ireland.

Coming Events
July 8th - National Nurses Day of Action agreed to produce national leaflet.
July 13th - Joint NF & Orange march. wasn't clear whether this would go ahead or not, should be prepared in any event.
 - TOM Conference, BI reported that we were organisating intervention at this.

National Minimum Wage
EC Introduced his resolution. WF had been demanding a NMW for some time but there was no clear idea of how this could be implemented - was it to be implemented from below or by a Labour Government? Nurses are now demanding a £30 minimum and so are local government workers. Should look towards solidarity actions and the combining of these struggles. Needed research on the recent struggles in Japan and NMW in France. Should raise the question in the women's organisations.

CBR Disappointed that EC had not related to his criticisms of his article in the IB by JST. There had been no explanation of how the NMW related to our overall programme. Thought EC was making a panacea of the NMW. NMW could be divisive unless seen as part of an overall programme.

MT We were not now discussing the NMW, but rather about the nature of demands and the programme. NMW is not a strategy - Trotsky describes a strategy as a co-ordinated set of demands leading to the seizure of power. As a "strategy" the NMW can be rendered harmless by the ruling class in any particular circumstances. NMW has in the past been part of a package of concessions, together with things like pensions. As a demand to unite the lower paid workers, it was limiting and not practical. On the question of a proposed pamphlet on the NMW, this was a question of publishing priorities.

SC There was a gap between this demand and the general class struggle. The success of the nurses had come from the support of the stronger sections of the working class - generally the situation with the struggle of lower paid workers was one of defeat. Thought that the NMW should be taken up in the paper but not as a central issue.

JS EC was looking for a way round the defeats of the lower paid workers. Agreed with EC on the need for a method of fighting for the NMW, but saw practical difficulties. Unity of Public Sector workers was no solution - there was a great divergence between the various groups of public sector workers.

SM The demand for a sliding scale of wages was necessary and important. SS of wages can be major mobilising factor particularly in a situation of slump combined with inflation. The existence of a Labour Government made the SS of wages more practical as a demand. Could combine NMW with SS of wages as a way of combining the stronger and weaker sections.

DS Should note that indexing was now being pushed forward by sections of bourgeois opinion.

AH Reminded cde.s, that we already had a position on the Sliding Scale of wages and that this line appeared in the current issue of the paper.

JW Reminded cde.s, that we also already had a line on the NMW. This was a minimum wage tied to the cost of living, also other forms of income tied to cost of living. Thought that any demand for a NMW must be inflation-proof or else it was irrelevant.

SC Couldn't see inflation continuing forever at present rate - there would be drastic action to curb it. Danger of going blindly ahead with the demand for a sliding scale of wages and tying the working class to accepting that wages only rose when the cost of living rose. Should rather see the Autumn wages struggle as decisive.
Organisation

AH Introduced SC majority resolution. Industrial work had ceased to be the central focus for WF. We needed to reverse this situation. There was self-deception about the forms of organisation - i.e. fractions and weekly paper. We needed a more realistic approach to our activities, more efficiency and concentration on key areas.

MT Introduced his amendment. A concrete appraisal was needed - wasn't just a case of saying more efficiency.

Efficiency had improved as far as the work was concerned but still no gains. Same goes for the paper. It was an empty shell - came out more or less regularly, well produced but although we had (say) very good articles on the docks we had no time left for organising docks work. The answer was to "get stuck in", especially around education and industrial work, using the journal.

JC Agreed with MT. By producing a weekly paper we were trying to pretend we were something that we weren't. JC in favour of fortnightly. Thought that a temporary decision to produce a weekly had been used to push through a weekly on a permanent basis. Must have more realistic targets.

CBY Liverpool branch was very much in favour of a weekly. Agrees with the need to promote industrial work. Details given about Liverpool in the SC resolution were inaccurate. Main work had been in anti-fascist committee, but there were a number of working class contacts who went to anti-fascist meetings regularly. To drop paper altogether would be disastrous.

SCY Had set a trend of surviving as a small group. Had been followed out of IS by many other small groups. Complexity of political scene had increased - more competition. Need for clarifying our position vis-a-vis other groups.

SM MT's premise about the failure of trying to act as a "mini-IS" was correct, we needed to base ourselves on propaganda work. But to drop the paper would be to drop the link with the working class - might be OK if the working class was passive but this was not the case. Since leaving IS, WF has developed by relating to the real world on an immediate basis - paper was essential to this. Had fallen down in the building of a cadre organisation - i.e. the fusion of education and organisation. Centre had failed to lead the group authoritatively. Need to take our politics more seriously; too much reaction against SFL.

DS Resolutions were passed and not carried out. We needed a realistic appraisal of what was possible. Magazine is vital for theoretical development. Strengthening of the centre is being looked at non-dialectically - not through purges, but through priorities. Correct to react against SFL as far as this is concerned. Must decide on priorities, but who decides? Must be the NC - i.e. we need national priorities.

JS Situation with Manchester debts to centre was an abdication of political responsibilities. In favour of weekly paper, but should recognise that real sales are less than print order.

AH On the question of weekly paper as opposed to fortnightly - weekly was easier to produce. Also needed more pamphlets as part of educational drive.

Colonisation

SCY Colonisation could be used to link areas of industrial work. SCY's experience of working on the buses had been promising but had left too soon. Should have been instructed to stay on - need for more discipline. Also could be seen as training of cadres - cdes. coming straight out of college had no experience of fighting for WF politics in (say) a union branch meeting. "Colonisation" was a long term tactic - had to be seen over a period of years.

JW Opposed to colonisation. Not opposed in principle but thought we were not at the stage where this could be applied as a general policy. Needed cdes. with light job responsibilities in order to do educational and "leg-work".

NS In favour of colonisation. In Manchester could have made a much greater impression in the print industry if had sent in a cde to work there.
Should therefore emphasise consolidation. EH had negotiated threshold agreement with consolidation. The RPI was false in as much as tax subsidies were being used to keep it down and yet working class paid for the taxes anyway.

AH The alternative of whether the NMW was to implemented from below or by the government was falsely put. NMW wage could only be implemented by the government but that meant a struggle to force the government from below.

EC Agrees with AH on above point. Agrees with MT about strategy, but had been misunderstood. Our role was to put pressure into currency - not to oppose NMW to existing struggles. Anticipates that there will be a unity of the lower paid workers, anyway, regardless of what MF does. What we could do was to anticipate this.

MT's formulation of demanding NMW tied to cost of living, but not seeing this as a total strategy was carried.

EC's resolution (see conclusions of article in IB 20) were voted on separately.

Point 1 was amended to commission articles for the paper on the NMW, this was carried.

Point 5 was carried.

Point 6 was amended to read "Equal pay for women" rather than "A living wage for women workers" and this was carried.

The remaining points were defeated.

International Economic Perspectives

JW Introduced comment. Realised that it was one-sided but thought that the increased prices of raw materials, in particular oil, was a very important development which had occurred during the past year. The extra revenue accruing to the OPEC states caused an upset in the balance of power between the imperialist rivals. Most of this revenue would flow back to the imperialist countries, because the backwardness of such states as Saudi Arabia meant that they couldn't use the revenue for industrialisation. This meant that such backward, feudal ruling classes as that in Saudi Arabia now had immense power to decide where they would invest their money. Such a situation could not but make for instability.

NS Asked question about inflation, which was right in debate between Glyn & Sutcliffe and Yaffe. G & S said inflation caused by strength of working class in wages demands and Yaffe said caused by state expenditure.

JW G & S argument was also about the degree of monopolisation, not just strength of the working class in winning wage demands. Thought this could explain the slow inflation there has been since the war. Couldn't explain the massive increase in the last five years. State expenditure not being financed was a possible explanation of this - this was one thing that the Tories were doing.

NS Why was Germany exceptional?

JW Simply because of the strength of German capitalism and it trade surplus with other capitalist nations.

SCY Advanced capitalists nations feared that there was a danger that Arab oil states would 'sit on' their money.

SM The question didn't just apply to oil but to many other primary commodities. Raised theoretical questions - what stage of imperialism are we at? Were we witnessing increasing third world economic independence? Eg Ireland, a neo-colony, but within the EEC Ireland has formal equality with Britain. There were major gaps in the development of Marxist theory.

NS Characterisation of Arab states as all backward and feudal was wrong. Egypt, for example was now relatively advanced and there were moves away from state capitalism.

Agreed that the economic perspectives document goes forward to aggregate (Gen JS, AH, MT abstained).
Not against in principle, but we needed colonisation by area rather than by industry.

It was a question of relating to the class struggle now. Couldn't be left till later when we had accumulated more cadres. Again question of taking our ideas seriously.

**Voting - Organisational resolution**

MT's amendment was defeated (12 votors)

CB proposed to delete paragraph referring to Liverpool as an example - carried.

Resolution as amended was carried (EH, DS, MT opposing)

**Colonisation**

CB proposed amendment: "The above relates mainly to men. It is recognised that there are particular problems relating to the position of women." - Carried

Resolution as amended was carried (DS, JW opposing)

**Anti-Fascist Work**

CB introduced resolution from Liverpool branch. L/pool cdes. came on the Red Lion Square demonstration came back with impression of gross lack of organisation. No universally understood instructions. Cde. in London should be responsible for anti-fascist work. Should set about initiating national anti-fascist committee.

MT trouble was that any anti-fascist committee in London effectively meant tying ourselves to the discipline of one of the other groups. CP and IMG were unpredictable and we couldn't bind ourselves to them. Rather get national anti-fascist committee through already existing local committees than getting on the phone to other groups. On the London demonstration, the Liverpool cdes. probably got the impression of disorganisation because the Liverpool coach arrived late. At the start, WF contingent was well organised but by the time L/pool coach arrived the demonstration had been broken up. Defence of people who were arrested was one thing which needed organising.

NS anti-fascist committee in Manchester was pressing for national liaison committee. Better to do it this way than by ourselves directly.

Moved resolution from Liverpool branch:

"The Liverpool branch of WF calls upon the SC to take immediate and practical steps to initiate the formation of a national Anti-Fascist Committee, possibly through the calling of a national Anti-Fascist conference. The action is urgently necessary in order to prevent the repetition of further organisational and political failings (confusion of political aim, lack of preparation; lack of organisation on march) such as the London Anti-Fascist demonstration on 15th June, and to ensure the building and coordination of a national Anti-Fascist movement, based on local Anti-Fascist committees such as that in Liverpool, capable of effectively combating and defeating the threat of the NF and other fascist organisations and further calls on the SC to appoint a cde. in London to nationally coordinate and initiate Anti-Fascist work." - Carried

**Sliding Scale of Subs**

It was agreed that a resolution from the NC should go to the Aggregate for a Sliding Scale of Subs. The SC to work out details.

**Bolton/Manchester**

SM proposed fusion of Manchester and Bolton branches. Had been discussed before at NC and didn't think that the decision should be put off any longer. Both branches were in a bad state. Unification was practical as far as distance was concerned.

JS supported unification of the branches.

SM's proposal was carried (JC opposing and JW abstaining)